

NATIVE PEOPLE AND RENEWABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The 1986 Symposium
of the
Alberta Society of Professional Biologists

Co-Sponsored by
Alberta Native Affairs
and
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Westin Hotel
Edmonton, Alberta

29 April - 1 May 1986

Copies of this document are available at \$18.00 from:

The Secretary
Alberta Society of Professional Biologists
P.O. Box 566
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 2K8

POLAR
PAM
4912a

4 1986

Freeman.

RENEWABLE RESOURCES, ECONOMICS AND NATIVE COMMUNITIES

Milton M. R. Freeman
Boreal Institute for Northern Studies
University of Alberta

ABSTRACT: *This paper reviews the role that renewable resource harvesting plays in contemporary northern Native communities. It is apparent that the significance of the resources and harvesting activities extend well beyond the economic value these resources may possess. Indeed, resource harvesting activities should be considered of fundamental importance in maintaining the social vitality of communities engaged in subsistence pursuits. In this view renewable resource harvesting in Native communities relates more to questions of culture, lifestyle and community, than to questions of neo-classical economics. This explains why the terms "ethnocide" or "cultural genocide" are used to describe the severe disruptions caused by outsiders' activities that compromise Native harvesting activities. The paper concludes by suggesting why the continued sustainable harvest of renewable resources remains in the national interest.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

My position on the topic of renewable resources and Native people is reflected in the title of my paper, chosen to emphasize that economic considerations are to be seen as only one aspect of the large part that renewable resources continue to play in the lives of may non-urban Native people, only one of the elements that interact to maintain the integrity of Native communities. Stated another way - renewable resources are important in far more than just economic terms.

My orientation or bias is inherently ecologic; that is, I am concerned to understand the various inter-relationships that exist between different parts of the community - where the term "community" refers to the total man and environment relationship. Clearly then, in rural areas, where people continue to harvest their own food from the land, concerns about the continued health of the environment will understandably be greater than in those communities in which this option is less feasible or where lifestyle changes, or occupational opportunities for the majority also preclude regular opportunity for wildlife harvesting. In any case however, I would not wish to minimize the importance - for psychological and cultural if not physiological and economic reasons - of the harvesting activities that do persist (Freeman 1985a; Looner 1986).

1.1 THE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical perspective I represent is that of cultural ecology; if there is one message that anthropology can relay that is relevant to our discussions it is the lesson of cultural relativity. This tells us that as there are so many different cultures in the world, co-existing and allowing members of their respective societies to recognizably persist often through centuries of time, there is no point at all in trying to judge any one of these cultures by the standards of any other culture. To restate this proposition, one could say that there is no standard culture (certainly not our North American variety) by which others are to be judged and deemed better or worse. This is so obvious that I apologize for even making the statement, but I do so because it is apparently necessary that scientists in particular

remember that their scientific culture is not shared by everyone, and that their own scientific culture is very recent, very much a developing field in terms of human intellectual understanding. David Suzuki, known to all of us as a biologist as well as an educator and commentator, has referred on more than one occasion to the "arrogance" of scientists (e.g., Suzuki 1985) an arrogance born out of a culturocentric (indeed a Euro-centric) view of the world. In this view, not only are those who do not subscribe to the scientists's definition of the problem held to be somehow lacking in their understanding of reality, but even where these scientists have few solid facts to support their assertions, they still expect non-scientists to accept their opinions as if they were statements of fact. Alvin Weinberg, (when editor of the journal Science) referred to these opinions as being in the realm of trans-science, rather than science (Weinberg 1976). The fact is, of course, that some societies base their own understanding of how the world works on quite different theories and approaches to knowing, although often based upon similar careful observation of natural events. Scientists in fact have no monopoly on the truth, and of course spend much of their professional lives disagreeing with their fellow scientists and "proving" each other to be wrong. Scientists are no less trapped within their own cultural biases - in this case the culture is a scientific culture - than are other men and women. Their scientific culture gives them rather rigid ways of seeking new knowledge and new interpretations of the knowledge. Like most other elite groups in societies world wide, scientists (as "professionals") erect boundaries to both keep out threatening new ideas and to keep members of their culture on the straight and narrow path to revealed truth.

If we wish to examine the importance of subsistence food gathering from a culturally relative (that is to say, an anthropological) point of view, we can see how the culturocentric view of orthodox wildlife managers is not only at odds with Native resource users' understanding of the situation (e.g., Freeman 1985b, Usher 1984), but in fact - as the history of North American wildlife management tends to show - creates problems for all concerned, including inevitably the wildlife resources.

2.0 THE NATURE OF SUBSISTENCE

2.1 THE SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE

The first problem is that Euro-Canadian society tends to view wildlife as an economic resource, and therefore resource harvesting as an economic activity. Wildlife management is full of notions that reflect this economic perspective. For example, the notion that animal populations should be utilized in a maximum (now "optimum") sustainable way or "waste" of the resource will occur. This parallels closely the capitalist view that in a rational economic system profits are to be maximized. Waste, or inefficiency in utilizing the best return on capital, is to be avoided. Those who maximize their return - and can continue to do so - are held to be behaving rationally, and those who don't should, in the interest of the system, be encouraged to change their strategies to conform to this preferred ideal.

2.2 SUBSISTENCE ECONOMICS

Anthropologists don't deny that renewable resources - fur, fish and game - when harvested have an important economic role to play. It is just that anthropologists, among others, recognize that not every society directs its economic behaviour toward profit maximization. Indeed, many traditional foraging societies (the hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering-based societies) produce merely to consume - not to accumulate for future investment in the fashion that industrially-based societies do with their economic assets. In

fact, in the so-called subsistence economies of hunting peoples, there are strict sanctions against surplus production that could lead to waste (e.g., Berkes 1981).

I should acknowledge that harvesting is not carried out in a way to produce just the amount needed for immediate personal or family consumption - surpluses can occur at anytime and often do, especially if the hunters or fishermen have coincident good fortune on a particular occasion. In such cases, the individuals so favoured convert their economic capital to social capital - by distributing the surplus production. Indeed widespread sharing and community feasting is a characteristic feature of all hunting and fishing societies. Moreover, in such societies there are values and sanctions to expressly guard against individual accumulation or hoarding of resources, and such societies have elaborate systems of kinship and social relationships which prescribe the channels along which the resources shall flow so that equanimity prevails in the face of the threat posed by unequal access to valued resources.

2.2.1 Social Goals of Subsistence

The purpose of nearly all so-called economic activity in such foraging societies is directed toward the reproduction of the social group. This of course contrasts quite markedly with capitalist societies' focus upon the individual rather than the larger society, where irrespective of whether the individual is a person, a family or a corporation, it is always only a small part of the society at large. However, it is reasonable to ask the question: How "traditional" or true to the earlier cultural values are today's descendents of former wholly hunting, gathering and fishing societies? It is quite true today that cash is an important part of everyday life, and that people need to obtain cash in order to sustain the hunting, trapping and fishing that they carry out. However, studies indicate that under such circumstances, people often adhere to a value system in respect to wildlife resources and other economic resources that is more similar to a traditional one than a capitalist one. For example, such resources are often viewed as being for immediate, rather than future consumption, and they are to be shared with the larger group rather than utilized for self-centered purposes. But equally to the point are the observations that in such situations, cash may be handled quite differently from wildlife resources and that different values may be held with respect to traditional and newly-imported resources. Furthermore, anthropologists are acutely aware of the tenacity with which people retain certain more traditional "core values" even when all outward manifestations may suggest that a rather massive material transformation in lifestyle and culture has occurred. Once again this indicates the complexity of the problem we are considering, and the danger inherent in an intuitive approach to understanding the processes at work.

2.2.2 Polar Bear Hunting: Canada and Alaska

The non-economic aspects of hunting can be illustrated by examining recent events that have been reported in regard to polar bear harvesting by Inuit hunters in the Eastern Canadian Arctic and in northern Alaska. Polar bears are an important economic resource: the skins fetch several hundred dollars each and quotas are in place in Canada to strictly limit the numbers of bears that can be harvested. As a general statement, one could say that under this management system every bear that can be legally taken will be harvested. However, hunters at two Baffin Island communities in 1985 expressed concern about a perceived reduction in the local bear population - a reduction corroborated by the results of scientists' studies of the regional bear population (see Lloyd, this volume). As a result of this changed circumstance the two communities voluntarily decided to significantly reduce the size of the quotas available to them: from 45 bears down to 15 in one community, and from 22 down to 10 bears in the other. I should add that the community reducing its bear harvest by 67 percent, is one of the Inuit communities that has been economically devastated by the European boycott of sealskins, a community that can least afford any further reduction in its economic circumstances. In similar fashion, equally challenging to

a neo-classical economic interpretation of wildlife resource values, comes this recent report in regard to Inupiat hunters at one Beaufort Sea community in Alaska:

"Little directed effort is expended to hunt (polar bears) although they are killed when the opportunity arises, and those taken are utilized for numerous purposes. Polar bears are occasionally abundant near some settlements, especially Kaktovik. The hunters at Kaktovik take fewer bears than they could, frequently not molesting bears that enter or appear on the outskirts of that village" (Burns 1985).

Clearly any analysis of the contemporary resource harvesting system that views renewable resources in a narrow economic sense is going to find the approach inadequate at many turns. Yet, elsewhere we read that the Alaskan North Slope hunters estimate the value of a bowhead whale at \$500,000, and of each caribou at \$1,000 (Burns 1985). Does this not suggest modern day Inuit hunters are valuing renewable resources in largely economic terms? Not at all; the value of caribou, or bowhead, and indeed of whitefish, ducks and ptarmigan, is as a resource whose continued exploitation allows reproduction of the social relations, the values and the distinctive cultural identity of the North Slope Inupiat. The dollar values are admittedly questionable; they are merely assigned to make an effective point with non-Native audiences who can more readily understand valuations stated in dollar terms.

2.2.3 The Bowhead Whale Example

The subsistence hunting of bowhead whales in several Alaskan Inupiat and Yupik communities today has a history going back for centuries. However, the influences of modernization have been experienced in the region since the days of the nineteenth-century North Pacific and Western arctic commercial whaling. Yet, despite this, and the recent influx of monetary wealth to the region following the discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay and passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971, the North Slope coastal Inupiat proudly refer to themselves as "The People of the Whale" (see Worl 1980).

Notwithstanding the Inupiat and Yupik communities' long and uninterrupted long history of dependence on the bowhead whale, efforts have been made by outside groups in the past decade to disrupt this relationship -- a result of mounting international concern over the impact of continued hunting on a severely depleted whale stock.

In order to investigate the claim of the Alaskan subsistence hunters that despite these recent modernizing changes to their lifestyle and society, bowhead whales are still "needed" by them, the International Whaling Commission undertook a study of the bowhead-subsistence whalers' contemporary dependence upon whales. This study (IWC 1982), sought to elucidate the relationship between the hunting of bowhead whales and several important institutions which structure contemporary Inupiat/Yupik society and ensure its maintenance and distinctive identity. Figure 1 shows in diagrammatic form these interrelationships, and the extent to which the hunt (in its several component parts) sustains -- and in turn receives reinforcement from -- these social institutions.

Table 1 on the other hand, indicates that other marine resources are unable to provide adequate replacement for the bowhead whale in respect to these important events (see also, Marquette and Braham 1982). This once again indicates the need for sensitive and detailed understanding of the nature of renewable resource use when making appropriate management decisions in a cross-cultural situation.

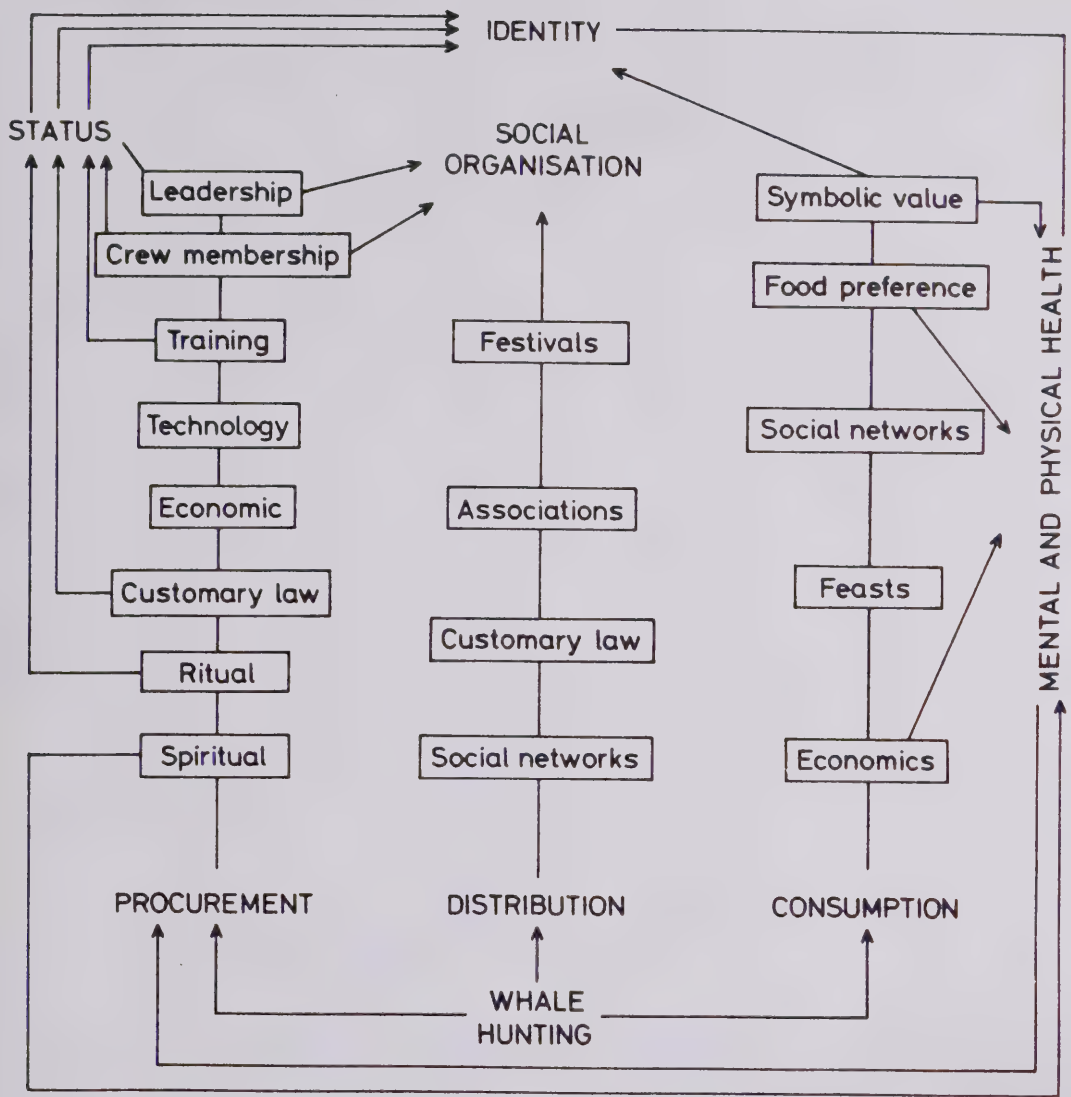


Figure 1. Relationships existing between social organizations and bowhead whale hunting (IWC 1982).

Table 1. Relative social and cultural significance of marine mammals in contemporary north Alaskan whaling communities.

	Bowhead	Walrus	Ringed and bearded seals	Beluga
Economic	4	1	1	1
Law	5	3	3	4
Skill/knowledge/training	5	4	5	4
Technology	5	4	3	4
Ritual	5	3	2	1
Ceremonial	5	1	1	1
Spiritual	5	3	1	1
Crew membership	5	2	2	2
Associations	5	1	1	1
Festival	5	1	1	1
Social networks	5	3	2	2
Feasts	5	1	1	1
Symbolic	5	2	1	3
Food preference	5	2	1	3
Leadership	5	2	2	2
Scores	74	33	27	31

Weak

(or not at all)

1

2

3

4

5

Strong

Scale

contribution to/involvement in each activity

3.0 SOME CONCLUSIONS

3.1 BASIS OF TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT

Any society which has a profound and continuing dependence on a set of resources for its future as well as present well being, is logically bound to have a strong self-interest in managing those resources in the best way possible. This is more especially the case with those particular resources whose manifold attributes are imbedded in the history, the myths, the symbols, the religion and the very identity of that society.

3.2 CONCERN FOR HABITAT PROTECTION

It follows that any threat to the continued well being of such valued resources represents a direct and serious threat to every member of that society. In fact, the very means by which that group of people seek to perpetuate their identity and sense of community, and to ensure a knowledgeable future for their children, is under direct attack. Such an attack is seen to be in progress if the habitat upon which the wildlife or fish resources depend is unduly threatened.

Given the ecologic realities of the north, such threats are real and troubling even when at a distance from the community's harvesting areas.

3.3 HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

I believe it follows from what I have said that where such resources are being harvested and otherwise managed in a rational (i.e., sustainable) fashion, then any imposition from outside interfering with these harvesting activities represents a denial of basic human rights. Canada, together with other member States of the United Nations is a signatory to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that all people are equal in dignity and rights, and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood. The Declaration asserts that the community is to be preserved, for only in such a setting can the full development of the human person be attained. In 1976 the member states of the United Nations went further, and signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This covenant asserts that there is a right to health (not just to life, but rather to an assured quality of life). As the laws of civilized states are there to protect the individual's legitimate desire for dignity, security and personal well being, any groups that oppose such legally-protected goals are outlaws, and their actions seemingly lacking in legal or moral substance. Such outlaws include the several urban-based groups who oppose sustainable utilization of wildlife resources by Native (and non-Native) harvesters. These groups, whose self-interest would deny basic human rights and self-determination to their fellow men should surely be repudiated by people of good will and understanding.

With respect to the sustainable utilization of renewable resources, within a few weeks of this conference, many nations of the world will meet in Ottawa to endorse (perhaps in modified form) the World Conservation Strategy. I would remind you of one of the articles (WCS:7.6) of that convention especially relevant to our discussions here. I quote:

"Where a community depending for subsistence wholly or partly on living resources effectively regulates utilization so that it is sustainable, its regulatory measures should be supported."

Other speakers at this conference will speak to these Native regulatory measures, and indeed there is a growing literature describing such effective renewable resources management systems in hunting and fishing societies around the world (see papers in collections edited by Cordell 1985, Freeman 1981, Lasserre and Ruddle 1983, Morauta et al 1982, Ruddle and Akimichi 1984, Ruddle and Johannes 1985, Williams and Hunn 1982).

3.4 THE NATIONAL INTEREST

In conclusion, I would like to state that sound management of fish and wildlife resources and habitat in the northern regions of our country is not just in the interest of the region and the communities found there - but is clearly in the national interest. A country's health and its self-image, as well as the evaluation others elsewhere place upon it, depends upon the health of all the country's regions. It is therefore very much in a nation's self-interest to promote vibrant self-sufficient communities, not only in the industrial and urban centres, but also throughout the countryside and at the periphery. In Canada, the vast expanses of the mid-North and the Far North are occupied by communities of people, some of whom in historic times have exploited renewable, and non-renewable resources. The non-renewable resource-based communities are temporary, usually there for short and uncertain periods of occupation. Their eventual demise brings hardship to many families. Renewable resource-based communities can, and usually do occupy these regions for indefinitely long periods of time and can thereby promote a sense of security, self-sufficiency and sustainable progress in their members, all of which I repeat, is clearly in the national as well as the regional and community interest.

We in the urban centres should do all in our power to support -- not oppose, or remain indifferent to -- the circumstances of these northern societies. Their long-term occupation of our sparsely settled boreal forest and arctic regions gives true substance to our claim of national sovereignty over vast territories that we in the south scarcely comprehend yet proudly insist give a distinctive strength and uniqueness to our national identity.

4.0 LITERATURE CITED

- Berkes, F. 1981. The role of self-regulation in living resources management in the North. Pages 166-177 in: Milton M. R. Freeman (ed.). Proceedings: First international symposium on renewable resources and the economy of the North. Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies and Canada Man and the Biosphere Program, Ottawa.
- Bordy, H. 1981. Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier. Douglass and McIntyre, Vancouver.
- Burns, J. J. 1985. Living resources. Pages 75-104 in: William E. Westermeyer and Kurt M. Shusterich (ed.) United States Arctic Interests: The 1980's and 1990's Springer-Verlag, New York.
- Cordell, J. C. (ed.). 1985. A sea of small boats: customary law and territoriality in the world of inshore fishing. Stanford University Press, California.
- Freeman, M. M. R. 1981. Persistence and change: the cultural dimension. Pages 257-266 in: Morris Zaslow (ed.) A century of Canada's Arctic Islands, 1880-1980. Royal Society of Canada, Symposium 23. Ottawa.

- Freeman, Milton M.R. 1985a. Effects of petroleum activities on the ecology of arctic man. Pages 245-273 *in*: F.R. Engelhardt (ed.) Petroleum effects in the arctic environment. Elsevier Applied Science Publishers, London and New York.
- Freeman, M. M.R. 1985b. Appeal to tradition: different perspectives on arctic wildlife management. Pages 265-281 *in*: Jens Brosted, Jens Dahl, Andrew Gray et al (ed.). Native Power: The quest for autonomy and nationhood of indigenous peoples. Universitetsforlaget AS, Bergen, Norway.
- IWC. 1982. Report of the cultural anthropology panel. Pages 35-49 *in*: G. Donovan (ed.). Aboriginal/Subsistence whaling (with special reference to the Alaska and Greenland fisheries). Reports of the International Whaling Commission, Special Issue 4, Cambridge, England.
- Lasserre, P. and K. Ruddle (eds.). 1983. Traditional knowledge and management of marine coastal systems. Biology International, Special Issue 4. International Union of Biological Sciences, Paris.
- Lonner, T. D. 1986. Subsistence as an economic system in Alaska: theoretical observations and management implications. Pages 15-27 *in*: Steve J. Langdon (ed.). Contemporary Alaskan Native economies. University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland.
- Marquette, W.M. and H.W. Braham. 1982. Gray whale distribution and catch by Alaskan Eskimos: a replacement for the bowhead whale? *Arctic* 35: 386-394.
- Morauta, L., J. Pernetta and W. Heaney (ed.). 1982. Traditional conservation in Papua New Guinea: implications for today. Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research, Monograph 16. Boroko, Papua New Guinea.
- Ruddle, K. and T. Akimichi (ed.). 1984. Maritime institutions in the western Pacific. *Senri Ethnological Studies* 17, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan.
- Ruddle, K. and R.E. Johannes (ed.). 1985. The traditional knowledge and management of coastal systems in Asia and the Pacific. UNESCO, Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Suzuki, D. 1985. The limit of science. *Science Dimension*, October 1985, Ottawa.
- Usher, P. J. 1984. Property rights: the basis of wildlife management. Pages 389-415 *in*: National and regional interest in the North: Third national workshop on people, resources and the environment north of 60°. Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, Ottawa.
- Weinberg, A. M. 1976. Science in the public forum: Keeping it honest. *Science* 191: 341.
- Williams, N. M. and E. S. Hunn (ed.). 1982. Resource managers: North American and Australian hunter-gatherers. American Association for the Advancement of Science, Selected Symposium, No. 67, Westview Press, Colorado.
- Worl, R. 1980. The North Slope Inupiat Whaling Complex. *Senri Ethnological Studies* 4:305-320, Osaka, Japan.
- World Conservation Strategy. 1980. IUCN-UNEP-WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

DATE DUE	
99999	Pam:639:(*41N) FRE
FREEMAN, Milton M.R. Renewable resources, economics and native communities	

DATE DUE SLIP

Due Cam APR 03 '96
RETURN JAN 07 '97

RETURN APR 23 1997

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 0368 7777